

From the Deacon's Desk

The Epiphany of the Lord:

It is an ancient tradition for parishes to bless chalk for each family so that they may mark the names of the three Magi over their doors, in the blessing of homes as a witness of their faith and protection against evil. The blessing of the home and inscription of the initials of the three Magi above one or more doors can be done by anyone from the parents to the children.

This year John, Marie, and Monica Frost have provided us with both the prayer cards and the chalk to be used, and we thank them for putting this all together.

We will bless the chalk at our weekend Masses, and after your prayer is recited at home, the initials C, M, B, can be used which come from a Latin phrase which means "Christ bless this house." Example for the year 2018 is 20 + C + M + B + 18. The inscription normally remains in place at least until Pentecost, 50 days after Easter.

Happy New Year!

Fr. Ron Wagner sends out a priest's newsletter reflection page every month, and I thought I'd share with you some of his reflections as we begin 2018.

Another New Year begins! Here's hoping for a good year ahead. I know some of you are facing health challenges and I wish you courage and strength and healing. Some of you will choose to make lifestyle changes, exercising, eating better, getting more sleep, I wish you perseverance. I know the temptation is to treat the new year just like the old one without any resolution to be different. Sometimes maintaining what we have been doing is the best we can think of, but the question that comes to mind is "How is that working out for you?"

If there were one small change done consistently over the course of the next 365 days, would it make you feel better, give you more peace of mind, and make you feel less burdened? I find waiting for someone else to realize what my needs are and provide for them is unrealistic. We are an independent, self-reliant sort. We're more reactive than proactive for the most part. Maybe that's just how I see things. I admit I'm a creature of habit and routine. Some of those habits and routines are healthy, others not so healthy.

I tend to muse and ponder more at the end of one year and the beginning of a new one. I'm not alone in doing so. It gives my mind a rest and a chance to think and reflect. What did I worry about a year ago? I can't remember. Will the things I worry about now still hold my attention this time next year? How many magic pills or plans or programs have come over the horizon since then? How many books sit on my shelves that I felt would solve the problems I was facing. I hope you find your "small change" that makes all the difference for you.

Alpha during Lent:

Those of you who are interested in being a small group leader for our Alpha program will start meeting soon. If you'd like to facilitate a small group discussion, please let me know ASAP.

This year will also have an alpha program for youth and teenagers which will meet at the same time as our adult sessions. After dinner, the adults and youth will separate to watch different presentations on the same topic, followed by small group sharing and discussion.

Last year we had great success in our first year of running Alpha, and we want to continue the enthusiasm. If you attended last year, please consider inviting someone new, or even perhaps, someone who has stopped going to church or has no church affiliation.

Alpha is a tool for re-energizing faith that is being used by thousands of Catholic parishes in over 70 countries around the world. In particular, it is attracting many young people who are asking the question, 'Is there more to life than this?'

Alpha is more of a faith sharing opportunity where people come together and explore what it means to be Christian. Alpha is not so much concerned with theological facts, but with basic "why am I here" questions. Alpha is much more about heart knowledge than head knowledge.

Christianity is first and foremost about relationships rather than rules. It is about a Person more than a philosophy. It is about the most important relationship of all—our relationship with the God of all. Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment is to love God. The second is to love our neighbor. So, it is also about our relationships with other people as well.

Alpha invites people to respond to the good news through a decision to follow Jesus. Parishes around the world have seen significant growth in numbers and a new enthusiasm for mission. New members of the parish, having come to faith during Alpha, frequently join parish activities and bring the freshness and joy of their encounter with Christ into the life of the parish.

If you'd like to be an Alpha small group facilitator, please let Jerry Green know. The Alpha Team will begin meeting soon.

Thank you for your kindness:

Thank you to the parishioners who gave me gifts and cards during Christmas. You are all very kind and generous to me, and you make me feel loved and valued. I'm sending out thank you notes, but if you don't get a thank you card soon, please let me know. God love you all!